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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [IT](#) [ITALIAN POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY: ROBERTO CALDEROLI NEW MINISTER FOR REFORMS

REF: A) ROME 2836, B) ROME 2815, C) MILAN 270,  
- D) MILAN 220

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[11.](#) (SBU) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: As expected, Prime Minister Berlusconi named Northern League National Coordinator and Senate Vice President Roberto Calderoli the new Minister for Reform and Devolution on July 20. Calderoli replaces League Secretary Umberto Bossi, who resigned the previous day to

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assume the seat in the European Parliament to which he was elected in June. Calderoli has been a League firebrand who has not always exercised even the minimal rhetorical control exhibited by the outspoken Bossi. Since his appointment as Minister, however, he has shown some restraint. Neither this appointment, nor the sum total of new ministers (two so far -- Calderoli and Domenico Siniscalco as Finance Minister (Ref A), with a third coming to replace Rocco Buttiglione, just named Italy's EU Commissioner, as Minister for EU Policies) constitute a major reshuffle, nor do they ease significantly the governing coalition's internal tensions, as they essentially maintain the status quo. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

[12.](#) (U) Roberto Calderoli was appointed Minister for Reform and Devolution in Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's center-right government on July 20, 2004. He replaced Northern League leader Umberto Bossi, who resigned on July 19 as a result of a long illness and hospitalization following a massive heart attack. (Refs B, D)

[13.](#) (U) Calderoli was elected to the Senate in May 2001 with the Northern League and appointed Senate Vice President the following June, a position from which he resigned to join PM Berlusconi's cabinet. Calderoli is also Northern League National Coordinator and will likely retain this position even during his government tenure. He is a member of the Senate Defense Committee and of the Joint Parliamentary Commission investigating the 1997 sale to Italy of a stake of Serbia's national telecommunication company, Telekom Serbia, during the Milosevic regime. Calderoli was a member of the Chamber of Deputies from 1992-2001, winning a seat for the Northern League in the national elections of 1992, 1994, and 1996, and was active in the Chamber's Social Affairs Committee.

[14.](#) (U) In 2003, Calderoli was the Northern League's representative and one of the governing coalition's four "wise men" during a five-day retreat to craft the government's draft law on constitutional reform and devolution. This draft law is currently being examined by the Chamber of Deputies; the Berlusconi Government has said the reform would be passed in 2004.

[15.](#) (SBU) Calderoli is devoted to Bossi and organizationally astute, regarded by many as a natural replacement to carry through to completion the Northern League's dream of devolution. As National Secretary of the Northern League/Lombard League 1995-2001, and party President 1993-95, Calderoli was a sort of "alter ego" to Umberto Bossi. He remains close to Bossi's wife, who wields considerable party influence herself, during the party leader's convalescence. (Ref D)

[16.](#) (SBU) Although he has been active in politics only since the 1990s -- in the early 90s, he was City Councilor in his hometown of Bergamo -- Calderoli has Northern League grassroots politics in his blood. His grandfather, Guido, founded an autonomist movement in the family's northern hometown and would make derogatory declamations against Italy's center and south. Roberto Calderoli also has spoken out provocatively on a number of political issues. While his friend and mentor Bossi has tended to reserve his inflammatory speeches for League rallies in its northern strongholds -- at least during the party's second experience in government -- Calderoli has not consistently exercised such restraint. The sometimes-impulsive Calderoli is balanced by other League leaders, such as the more studied Minister of Labor Roberto Maroni. (Ref C)

[17.](#) (U) A doctor specialized in facial surgery, Calderoli

followed a family tradition: his grandfather, father, four uncles and three of his seven brothers are dentists and are commonly regarded as the best in Bergamo. He was born in Bergamo on April 18, 1956. He was a motorcycle racer during the 1970s-80s, competing and winning regional rallies. He is married. His English level is not known.

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